



Advance Care Planning Decisions

CASE STUDY

Novello Physicians
Organization (NPO)





CASE STUDY: ACP DECISIONS

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NPO Implements ACP Decisions' Video Library to Support a Whole-Person Care Approach Across an Independent Provider Network



I. Background

[Novello Physicians Organization](#) (NPO) is one of the largest independent physician organizations in Northern Michigan, serving a patient population of over 100,000. **NPO's mission is to provide healthcare leadership via an organization of successful, independent physicians.** The organization strives to create innovative solutions to improve patients' overall health and wellness throughout the region and support member physician practices in maintaining their Patient-Centered Medical Home Neighborhood (PCMH-N) designation status.

II. Challenge

Ideally, addressing goals of care and planning for crisis intervention for patients with serious and life-threatening conditions occur in the outpatient setting. However, the reality is that many of these patients end up in the emergency department (ED) to receive urgent care for symptoms related to their chronic illness. The absence of advance directives is also particularly problematic in the ED since medical care is often provided in this setting.

This was one of the challenges NPO was facing. The organization heard from ED doctors and intensivists that they were seeing a lot of patients

who had no idea what kind of care they wanted – or they had an idea, but a family member would intervene and upend the care plan.

NPO was also dealing with another common ED issue: overreliance of the ED as a usual source of care. In some of the cities in which they operate, there is only one hospital serving the local population. Not only is it imperative to ensure the ED is available for traumas, but also to promote appropriate utilization, which would drive better outcomes.

NPO decided to initiate an advance care planning program in the primary care setting to achieve two goals:

1.

Improve appropriate ED use.

2.

Ensure patients receive the medical care they want.





III. Partnering with ACP Decisions

Kris Elliott, Director of Operations at NPO, oversees all aspects of operations, including quality improvement initiatives.

She was seeking resources to support NPO's advance care planning initiative. A hospitalist and palliative care specialist at NPO had recently done a palliative care presentation and recommended the [ACP Decisions Video Library](#).



Kris Elliott, Director of Operations at NPO

In 2018, NPO kicked-off an advance care planning initiative with nine of their primary care practices. The ACP Decisions videos were provided as a tool to augment goals-of-care conversations, particularly with Medicare beneficiaries and generally all older patients and patients with a newly diagnosed terminal disease.

"We did a mild sweep. A small broom, not a big one – and we recruited some practices with a goal of starting with ten," explains Kris. *"We didn't quite make it. We had four or five who really took it on. It was a big change."*

Initially, it was the practices with established care management programs in place that embraced the initiative. The care managers – many of whom were either medical social workers, nurses, or advanced practice providers (APPs) – would start the discussion and share a relevant ACP Decisions video.

IV. Overcoming the Billing Roadblock

Since NPO's practices are independent, billing can be a roadblock to utilizing the videos. *"If the doctor isn't seeing patients and earning revenue, it directly impacts the practice,"* says Kris. *"Since our practices are independent, the providers are not on*

someone's payroll. Sometimes we have a problem explaining that to insurance companies. When they require several hours of training, that represents lost revenue for the practice. It's not the same with hospital-employed physicians – it's just two hours out of their day whether they're seeing patients or not."

Most of NPO's practices have overcome the billing issue by integrating the videos into the annual wellness visit or physical, depending on the payor. Rachael Smart, Manager of Quality, explains: *"Whoever rooms the patient will introduce and show the appropriate ACP Decisions video at that time. And then the provider follows up with the advance care planning conversation during the visit."*

This enables the practices to document, bill and be reimbursed appropriately through Medicare, Medicare Advantage, or through the insurance companies that have care management codes for advance care planning.

V. The Results

The quality team uses metrics scorecards to track results quarterly for its CMS Direct Contracting program, which includes video utilization.



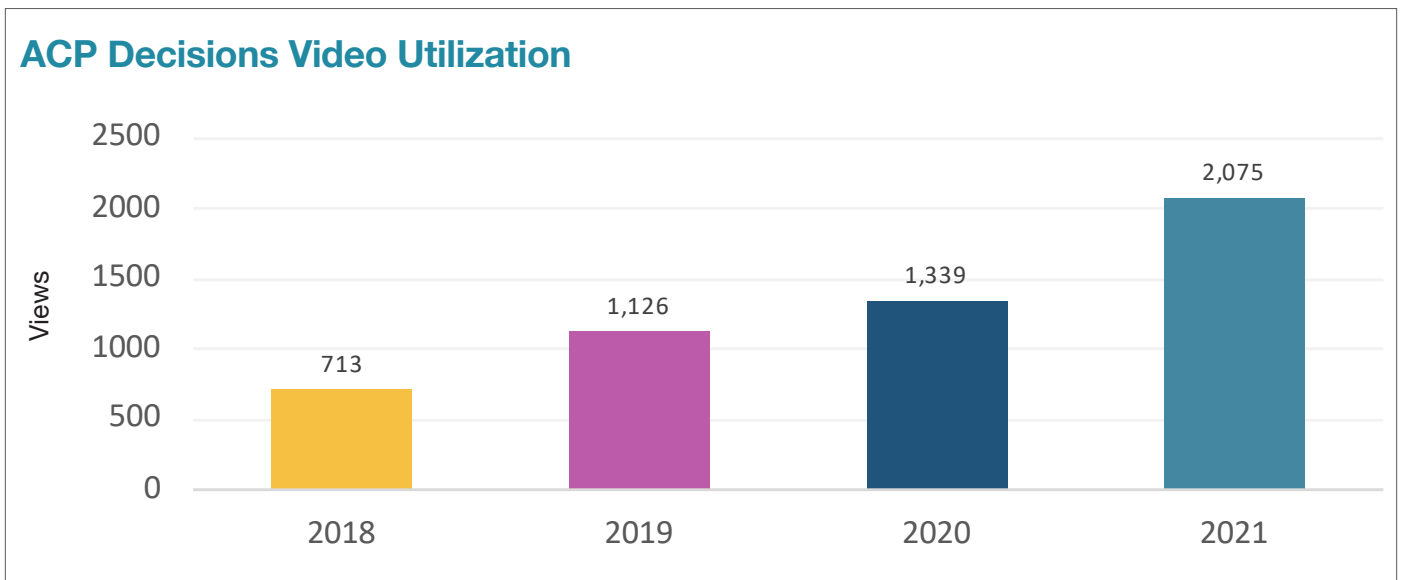


Video utilization has significantly grown since the advance care planning initiative began in 2018, with an overall increase of 191% (see chart below).

“We weren’t trying to hold anyone to outcomes, just show the videos – let’s get them out there,” states Rachael. “That metric ties to dollars for the physicians, which definitely has encouraged an increase in video usage.” Additionally, as care

Since the advance care planning initiative began in 2018, video utilization has seen an 191% increase overall.

management programs within the practices have grown, they have helped drive greater adoption of the ACP Decisions Video Library.



Concurrently, the team tracks the days spent during the last 6 months of life at: skilled nursing facilities, inpatient care, hospice, ED, and at-home, and there has been overall improvement in those metrics.

“We send this report out to the practices every December,” explains Kris. “By patient, it lists where they spent their days at the end of life. And we ask the doctors: is this how your patient wanted to spend their last six months? Then we list the tools we have available. The practices have their care managers, and we have the ACP Decisions video resources. It could be the patient wanted to spend that time in the ICU fighting to the very end. And that’s great if that’s what the patient wanted. The primary care physician

should know if that’s truly what the patient wanted – and we just want to get them thinking about that.”

The ED providers acknowledge that more patients are coming in with advance care plans and that ED visits are low and continue to drop. In fact, Maximum ED Days for patients in the last six months of life has declined from 54 to 6 between 2018 and 2020.

Providing the ACP Decisions Video Library as a tool to enhance advance care planning in the primary care practices has helped NPO achieve its goal of decreasing ED visits, which also impacts hospital admission and readmission rates. *“We have one of the lowest emergency room admission rates in the*



state and the videos are a tool to help support that,” says Kris. “We say, if you keep patients out of the emergency room, they're not admitted. And if they're not admitted, they're not readmitted. Our initiative has shown that effective advance care planning can drive all three metrics.”

Looking Ahead

The quality team at NPO has found the ACP Decisions team to be very supportive and looks forward to continuing the partnership. **They plan to explore more opportunities to improve the quality of care for their patient population, including:**

- Normalizing the serious illness conversation via provider education
- Increasing referrals to hospice and home-based palliative care
- Improving video access for patients by offering [pre-made codes](#)
- Sharing videos from different topic areas across the ACP Decisions Video Library

Additionally, Kris hopes NPO will realize a shared savings in their risk contracts by keeping their hospital admissions and ED usage low. “I think in terms of continuous improvement,” she says, “and the ACP Decisions videos are a fantastic tool to help us with that journey.”



About ACP Decisions

ACP Decisions has more than 400 evidence-based video decision support tools that promote effective advance care planning and are easily accessible on a user-friendly technology platform. If your organization is interested in implementing an advance care planning initiative or improving your current efforts, let's talk!

To learn more about how to improve advance care planning at your organization, visit ACP Decisions at acpdecisions.org or email support@acpdecisions.org

